



Australian Bureau of Statistics

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Indigenous Australians continue to face labour force market inequality

Indigenous Australians remained three times more likely to be unemployed, and less likely to be either working or looking for work than other Australians, according to a new study based on 2001 Census data released today by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS).

The study, by Dr Boyd Hunter from the Centre for Aboriginal Economic Policy Research (CAEPR) at the Australian National University found that work undertaken by Indigenous Australians was more likely to be concentrated in the public sector and low skilled occupations.

"The study also revealed that Indigenous Australians remained predominantly wage and salary earners, as opposed to self-employed," he said.

"Indigenous Australians remained three times less likely to be self-employed than other Australians. Recent growth in Indigenous self-employment has been concentrated among small businesses who do not employ anyone else."

"A new finding from the study was that the scope for labour market discrimination is more important than previously thought. Furthermore, labour market discrimination is more likely to manifest in an inability of Indigenous individuals to secure a job, rather than in being paid low wages."

"Poor education levels was the major cause of the employment differences between Indigenous and other Australians. Improving high school retention rates and the level of educational qualifications amongst Indigenous Australians are important factors in reducing Indigenous labour market inequality."

The study examined the role of the Community Development Employment Program (CDEP). CDEP accounted for one-third of Indigenous employment, but the majority of these jobs were part-time. Four in five (80%) males and 82% of females were employed part-time in CDEP jobs, compared with 41% of Indigenous males and 56% of Indigenous females in all jobs.

ABS Director of Census Products and Services, Michael Beahan said, this report was one of eight studies commissioned by the ABS under its Australian Census Analytic Program (ACAP) and highlights the value of census data in examining social issues within Australia.

Further details are in **Australian Census Analytic Program: Indigenous Australians in the Contemporary Labour Market** (cat. no. 2052.0).

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